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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 049662

FOLLOWING REPEAT PARIS 6303 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO ADDIS ABABA CAIRO JIDDA LONDON MOGADISCIO KHARTOUM NAIROBI SANA MOSCOW 03 MAR 77

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 06303

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PDEV FR FT
SUBJ: ELYSEE VIEWS ON FTAI

REF: PARIS 4832

1. IN CONVERSATION DEVOTED LARGELY TO OTHER SUBJECTS ON MARCH 3, ELYSEE AFRICAN ADVISOR RENE JOURNIAC DESCRIBED THE CURRENT TALKS AMONG FTAI FACTIONS IN PARIS AS TOTALLY ONE-SIDED, WITH ALL AFRICAN PARTICIPANTS BEING TELEGUIDED FROM MOGADISCIO. UNDER SUCH CONDITIONS, AND GIVEN SOMALIA'S MOMENTARILY COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE, THE TALKS MIGHT BE SAID TO BE PROGRESSING WELL. THE TIMETABLE ON WHICH AGREEMENT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN REACHED PROVIDES FOR A REFERENDUM APRIL 24, AND INDEPENDENCE BY THE END OF JUNE.
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2. ACCORDING TO JOURNIAC, THE DJIBOUTIANS IN PARIS DESIRE A FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE AFTER INDEPENDENCE. THE FRENCH HAVE INFORMED THEM THAT IN VIEW OF THE SITUATION IN THE HORN, THEY ARE PREPARED EITHER TO MAINTAIN THE SAME NUMBER OF TROOPS AS NOW (6000 MEN) OR TO PROVIDE A SMALL NUMBER OF MILITARY INSTRUCTORS;

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THE FRENCH WILL NOT ACCEPT AN INTERMEDIATE FIGURE OF
SAY 1500 MEN.

3. JOURNIAC, TOO, DESCRIBED ETHIOPIA'S PRESENT POLICY
TOWARDS DJIBOUTI AS THAT OF "THE WORST OPTION".
HE SAID THAT ADDIS IS CLEARLY PREPARING THE GROUND FOR
AN EVENTUAL DECLARATION OF AN INDEPENDENT AFAR STATE
FOLLOWING THE OFFICIAL FRENCH WITHDRAWAL. ETHIOPIA'S
CURRENT TACTIC IS TO ATTEMPT TO DISRUPT THE PARIS TALKS
IN A WAY THAT WOULD INSURE THE DEPARTURE OF FRENCH
TROOPS WHEN DJIBOUTI OBTAINS INDEPENDENCE. JOURNIAC
DOUBTED THAT THE ETHIOPIANS WOULD GO THROUGH WITH THEIR
PROJECT FOR DECLARING AN AFAR STATE IF SUBSTANTIAL
FRENCH FORCES REMAIN, BUT THOUGHT THAT A REDUCED FRENCH
MILITARY PRESENCE MIGHT ENCOURAGE THEM TO DO SO, WITH
A RESULTANT CONFLICT BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND SOMALI.

4. JOURNIAC SAID THAT SUCH A MOVE BY ETHIOPIA WOULD
RESULT IN THE SLAUGHTER OF THE SMALL AFAR MINORITY IN
DJIBOUTI CITY, WHICH THE ETHIOPIANS COULD NOT HOPE TO
HOLD AGAINST THE ISSA MAJORITY SUPPORTED BY SOMALIA.
HE BEMOANED THE FACT THAT THE FRENCH HAVE NO ONE IN
ADDIS WITH WHOM THEY CAN CONTINUE SERIOUS DISCUSSION OF
THE PROBLEM; BANTE IS DEAD AND FONMIN KIFLE HAS
DECIDED NOT TO RETURN FROM HIS VISIT TO NIGERIA.

5. WHILE UNDERLINING THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH THE FRENCH
FACE, JOURNIAC REITERATED FRANCE'S INTENTION TO PERSIST
IN TRYING TO DO ITS DUTY IN A VERY IMPORTANT AREA.
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6. COMMENT: AT THE RISK OF BORING READERS, WE AGAIN
POINT OUT THAT THE SUPPORT IN FRANCE FOR MAINTAINING
FRENCH TROOPS IN DJIBOUTI IS ALMOST NIL AND THAT WITH
LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN ONE YEAR, ANY GOVERNMENT WOULD
FIND IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO DO SO IF FACED WITH
LOCAL DISTURBANCES THREATENING TO FRENCH LIVES.
RUSH

UNQUOTE CHRISTOFER

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